Let the Nations Be Glad

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Preacher: Ray Park

[0:00] Today we are studying Psalm 67, so if you guys can flip there. Alright, I will read Psalm 67 and then we can get into the passage.

To the choir master, with stringed instruments, a psalm, a song. May God be gracious to us and bless us, and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.
Let the peoples praise you, O God, let all the peoples praise you. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity, and guide the nations upon earth.
Let the peoples praise you, O God, let all the peoples praise you. The earth has yielded its increase. God, our God, shall bless us. God, shall bless us. Let all the ends of the earth fear him.
So as Christians, prayer is an important part of our lives. Prayer is the breath of faith that speaks out to God from our hearts. And tonight we've gathered together to pray, right?
[1:12] We pray a lot. And oftentimes the biggest part of our prayers, at least for me, is our requests, right? But I also know for me my requests can be pretty thoughtless.

They can be just what I need in that moment or what I want in that day. But if I give more thought to my prayers, I might ask, what should I pray for?
And importantly, what reason do I give to God for granting me my prayers, right? So just putting a little bit more thought into it. And this psalm addresses those questions head on. So it says, namely, we should pray for a lot.
We should pray big prayers. And the reason is so that God will be praised among the nations. And that's the main point of this passage, that God would bless us so that the nations will praise him.
So let's look at this psalm in three parts. A prayer for God's blessing in verses 1 through 3. And then the joy of God's rule in verses 4 through 5.
[2:14] And the first fruits of God's grace in verses 6 through 7. So verses 1 through 3, a prayer for God's blessing. The psalmist here echoes the benediction of Aaron from Numbers chapter 6.

And he asked for God's blessing using three words or ideas. That God would be gracious, that he would bless, and that he would make his face shine upon us. So looking at these three ideas, being gracious refers to the kindly action of a superior party to an inferior one in which the inferior has no claim on the superior.
So superior, inferior, and the inferior has nothing to offer. So it's like a beggar with nothing to offer yet needs all of his needs met. And I think it's wonderful that grace is a fundamental aspect of God's character.
In Exodus 34, verse 6, we learn of God, The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.
So we have no claim upon God. We can't say, give me this because of something that I did. And he's good to us simply because he chooses to be, because that's who he is.
[3:35] And this is such a comforting thing that we can appeal to God based on his character. It's not, you know, God, please be good to me because I deserve it, or because you're in a good mood today, but because that's who you are.

So that's God being gracious. The psalmist also talks about blessing. So I think these are ideas that we're all familiar with, but just to give some more concreteness to it, blessing is the idea of abundance and fertility in all areas of life.
So it's about having success, having increase, having fruitfulness. And lastly, God's face shining upon us refers to God's presence shining forth in kindness to his people.
It's about God being with us and God being for us. Contrast this with God hiding his face from us. So being distant from us, being disconnected.

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That's a scary thought, right? If God's away from us and not for us. So we want his presence. We want his face to shine on us. And these all sound great, right?
[4:43] Like who doesn't want kindness, increase, success? No one objects to these things, right? But the problem is when we make our requests about ourselves, right?

I think of a tree's branches should be stretching out towards the sun, but it's like twisting inwardly on ourselves, right? It's not natural. But that's what we do. You know, we might ask God, please grant me this career, but not for him, but for prestige or wealth or personal security.
We might ask God, please grant me a spouse, not for him, but for our own comfort and enjoyments. So not that these are bad things, but the question is what is our motivation?
And the psalmist writes that he desires God's blessing so that God would be known and God would be praised. So a couple of things to ask ourselves.
One, what are we asking God for in our lives right now? What do you tend to bring to him in the mornings or evenings when you pray? Are they small prayers because you think God is small or you don't deserve it?
[5:50] Are they big prayers because you know that he's big? What are your heart motivations? Are you pursuing your own things or are you pursuing God's things?

The second part of the psalm in verses 4 through 5 talks about the joy of God's rule. And this is for the nations. So it says God judges with equity, which means fairness or uprightness.
So God is God. He's not a man. He doesn't succumb to corruption or flattery or fallibility. You don't have to worry that he'll make decisions based on someone being richer than you are.
You don't have to worry that he'll prefer someone who's more eloquent than you and can persuade him with better arguments. You don't have to worry that someone with better social or family connections is going to come out ahead before God.
Because no, God judges fairly. What he does is right and good and just. And so this makes us yearn for God.
[6:59] The one who is in power and makes things right instead of oppressing others or taking advantage of others. Which we so often see in our world.

And it's such a delight to be ruled by him. And this is what the nations can look forward to. And third, in verses 6 through 7, we read of the first fruits of God's grace.
So the psalmist speaks specifically here of seeing the earth's harvest, which is proof, existing proof, that God does bless them. But there's more to this, more to God's grace than just the earth's harvest.
In our world, in our lives today, in a spiritual sense, we also see God's harvest. But we live in a time where we have already, but not yet fully. We've experienced God's grace to us when he answers our prayers.
We experience his face shining upon us when we experience his tenderness and his love and his faithfulness. But also, on a daily basis, we're fighting over sins.
[8:02] And sometimes the same sins over and over again, which can be really frustrating. We still experience grief and sorrow over loss, over death, over the injustices of society.

And so we have, and yet we don't have. We've received, but we're waiting for more. So this points us to Christ not to despair, not to be impatient, not to give up, but to hope in Christ, to persevere, to pursue him and pour out our hearts to him in deep yearning and prayer, to imitate Christ, who lived not in a self-centered way, not to preserve himself, but he lived in obedience to God and laid down his life to save us.
So a few questions. What does your heart yearn for tonight? And how can we pray so that God would be known and praised by the nations?
Because we know that that is aligned with what God is doing in the world. So with that, let's sing another song, honey. And we'll go into our time of prayer. Thank you.

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